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HE RELATION OF NEW  
HAMPSHIRE MEN TO  
THE SIEGE OF BOSTON

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*WILLIAM F. WHITCHER*



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THE RELATION  
OF  
NEW HAMPSHIRE MEN  
TO THE  
SIEGE OF BOSTON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW HAMPSHIRE SOCIETY OF SONS OF THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION AT CONCORD, N. H., JULY 9, 1903

BY  
WILLIAM F. WHITCHER

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## THE RELATION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE MEN TO THE SIEGE OF BOSTON.

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The siege of Boston began on the 19th or 20th of April, 1775, and ended some eleven months later on the 17th of March, 1776. In the history of sieges this must be regarded as one of the most remarkable of which we have record. An army of the regular and well disciplined troops of one of the world's great powers was shut up in the little peninsula town of Boston, surrounded and held in check by what were at first several independent bodies of raw, undisciplined militia, scantily armed and equipped, recognizing no single military authority, and owning and professing allegiance to the same king whose troops they were holding in check, and who only became worthy the name of an army after months of waiting, after a battle had been fought, and after they had been taken in hand for organization and discipline by one whose sublime patience, consummate tact, matchless wisdom, and military genius gave him a unique place among the world's commanders.

When Percy, on the night of the 19th of April, returned from his ill-fated expedition to Concord, and bivouacked on Bunker hill with such of his troops as were not left dead or dying by the roadside, the Americans posted sentinels at Charlestown Neck, and by the night of the 20th, when the wounded and dying British soldiers had been carried from Charlestown into Boston, a considerable army of Americans had assembled at Cambridge and Medford from the nearer sections of New England, and the avenues of egress from the town which was occupied by the British forces began to be guarded. After the 19th of April General Gage and his successors never again sent out an armed man by land from Boston. The town was in a state of siege. Civil government came to an end. The records of the selectmen end abruptly: "At a meeting of the selectmen this 19th of April, 1775, present Messrs. Newhall, Austin, Marshall,———." And this is all. Nothing further appears on the records of the civil magistrates till March, 1776, when they were

begun once more. Martial law came in, and martial law permits the provost marshal to do as he pleases.

It is not, however, the purpose of this paper to trace the course of events between the 19th of April and the 17th of June, when General Gage attempted to raise the siege at Bunker hill, or to give an account of the part played by New Hampshire men in the siege during these two months, and in that ever memorable battle, since that has already been done with painstaking care and accuracy in the able and scholarly paper read at the last annual meeting of the society by the Hon. Henry M. Baker; but rather to sketch briefly the relation of New Hampshire men and troops to the events following the battle of Bunker hill and ending with the evacuation of the town by the British March 17, 1776.

Such a sketch must, at its best, be inadequate and incomplete, since there is no means of identifying the New Hampshire men who were serving in Massachusetts regiments. There were such at Bunker hill, as has been conclusively shown, and in most of the regiments from eastern Massachusetts there were also New Hampshire men in considerable numbers. We can deal only with the organized regiments and companies raised and officered by New Hampshire authority. The regiments of Colonels Stark and Reed were at Bunker hill and performed magnificent service. When the battle was over they did not retreat far. They stopped at Winter hill, now within the limits of the city of Somerville, on the night of the battle, and began preparations at once to occupy and fortify it. This eminence, in sight of Charlestown, and within cannon shot distance of Bunker hill, was one of the most important points to the north of Boston, and the spot was well chosen by the New Hampshire colonels for fortifications and intrenchments, and was, indeed, of greater value than was Prospect hill, near by, which was occupied by General Putnam the same evening, and who spent the entire night with his troops in throwing up intrenchments. A small force had been previously posted on Winter hill, consisting of a subaltern, two sergeants, and twenty men, but nothing had been done by way of fortification. The regiments of Stark and Reed were joined two days later by that of Colonel Poor, with the exception of one company which was left for guard duty in New Hampshire, and Gen. Nathaniel Folsom, on June 20, arrived and took command. Colonel Poor's regiment, owing to a lack of tents, was obliged to quarter for a time in Medford, but his men worked with those of the regiments of Stark and Reed in vigorously pushing the works which had been begun. The fort on this hill, which was the headquarters of the three

New Hampshire regiments for nearly all the time during the siege, is said to have been larger, and the intrenchments to have been more numerous than those of any of the other positions of the army, and Ploughed hill, which was still nearer to Charlestown, afterwards known as Mount Benedict, and the site of the historic Ursuline convent, which was later occupied and fortified by the New Hampshire troops, may be regarded as almost a part of the Winter hill works.

The New Hampshire troops thus at the very beginning, and, indeed, for the greater part of the time during the siege, were given a position by themselves, were the larger part of one of the six brigades into which the army was divided, and were under the command of a New Hampshire brigadier.

On the 21st of April, 1775, two days after the Lexington and Concord fight, a convention which had been hastily summoned met at Exeter and chose Nathaniel Folsom of that town brigadier-general to command the troops that had gone, or might go "from this government to assist our suffering brethren in the province of Massachusetts." General Folsom, while not a great soldier, had rendered gallant service in the French and Indian war of 1755. He commanded a company at Fort Edward, and did distinguished service at the defeat and capture of Baron Dieskau, and before the Revolution broke out had been made a general officer of the militia by the provincial government. It was, doubtless, this fact which led to his selection by the convention instead of John Stark, who in the same war had unquestionably rendered more brilliant service. Stark had, immediately on hearing the news from Lexington, left for the scene of hostilities, and was at the time of Folsom's appointment actively engaged in raising troops for the patriot cause. He felt slighted at the preferment of Folsom, and refused at first to serve under him, but his enthusiasm for the cause made his hesitation only temporary. Folsom's service at Winter hill was but brief, being relieved July 7 or 8 by John Sullivan, who had been made one of the eight brigadiers by the continental congress when Washington was made commander-in-chief. General Folsom returned home and devoted himself to patriotic service in civil life, serving in the continental congress in 1777-1778, as he had previously served in 1774-1775.

The New Hampshire convention of April 21 adjourned April 25, but formal notices had, in the meantime, been given the towns to send delegates to a convention to be held on the 17th of May, and this convention had, when assembled, proceeded to prepare for war in earnest. It was voted to raise a force of two thousand men, and to

adopt those already in the field either as independent squads or in Massachusetts organizations. It was also voted to organize these troops into a brigade of three regiments. Brigadier-General Folsom was appointed major-general, and James Reed and Enoch Poor colonels of two of the regiments. The other colonelcy was left open for John Stark if he should see fit to resign the commission he had just accepted under the Massachusetts government. Stark, as has been previously said, hesitated, but finally went to Exeter and took a commission from the convention as colonel of his regiment, which was already in the field under Massachusetts authority. This regiment was styled, in order to satisfy Stark's scruples concerning seniority "the First regiment in New Hampshire for the defense of America." As organized it consisted of twelve companies, two of which it was arranged were to be turned over to Colonel Reed. Colonel Poor's regiment was called the Second New Hampshire and Colonel Reed's the Third.

It is hardly necessary to speak of Colonels Stark, Poor, and Reed, who were each active and prominent figures in the siege. There was but one John Stark in the war of the Revolution. Of Scotch-Irish ancestry, his father an emigrant from the north of Ireland, having been one of the original proprietors of Dunbarton (then called Starkstown), he was born in Londonderry May 8, 1722. His early life was that of the frontier woodsman and huntsman. He was captured by the Indians in 1752, remaining in captivity until ransomed by the province of Massachusetts. In 1755 he became a lieutenant in Maj. Robert Rogers's famous corps of Rangers, and served with it, soon rising to the rank of captain, through all the campaigns around Lake George and Lake Champlain, in which region traditions still exist of his capacity and bravery. At the close of this French and Indian war, so called, he engaged in farming at Derryfield, now Manchester, and continued in this until the news from Lexington reached him. He promptly mounted his horse, and, followed by several hundred of his neighbors, set out for Cambridge. Commissioned as colonel by the Massachusetts government, in one day he recruited his regiment, composed almost exclusively of men from the New Hampshire frontier towns. What it accomplished at Bunker hill New Hampshire, at least, knows by heart. It is hardly to be wondered at that he felt his service entitled him to something more than ordinary recognition at the hands of the Exeter government, and that he hesitated about accepting service under Nathaniel Folsom.

Enoch Poor was a native of Massachusetts, born at Andover June

11, 1736. He served at the age of nineteen as a private under his brother Thomas, captain in the expedition under Gen. John Winslow for the subjugation of the French inhabitants of Nova Scotia, and the protection of that peninsula from the government of France. He removed to Exeter, N. H., about 1760, where he followed the occupation of shipbuilder, and became active in the measures and events of the province leading up to the Revolution. He was a member of two of the three provincial congresses held in 1775, being prevented from participating in the third only by his other patriotic engagements. When the provincial congress, May 21, authorized the raising of a regiment in addition to the troops then at Cambridge, of which it was proposed to make two, Poor devoted himself to the task and speedily accomplished it. His regiment was kept on duty in New Hampshire until after the battle at Bunker hill, when it joined the other two regiments at Winter hill, with the exception of one company under the command of Capt. Henry Elkins of Hampton, which was reserved for coast duty in that town until August 1. Subsequent events proved that no mistake was made in bestowing a colonel's commission upon Poor, or in giving him his later promotions. His premature death in New Jersey in the autumn of 1778, more than four years before the close of the war, is perhaps the cause of a neglect on the part of his state to honor his memory and his distinguished services as they deserve, a neglect which is to be regretted, but for which it is hoped at least partial atonement may soon be made.

James Reed was also a native of Massachusetts, born in Woburn in 1724. Like Stark and Poor he also saw service in the French and Indian war, commanding a company in Col. Joseph Blanchard's regiment in the campaign under Sir William Johnson in 1755. He was with Gen. James Abercrombie at Ticonderoga in 1758, and also served under Gen. Jeffrey Amherst in 1759. In 1765 he settled in Fitzwilliam, N. H., of which town he was one of the original proprietors, and at the outbreak of the Revolution his military experience, energy, and commanding address made him unusually efficient in securing recruits for the American cause. He had been made a lieutenant-colonel in the New Hampshire militia in 1770, and in May, 1775, was in command of a regiment of New Hampshire men at Cambridge. His service at Bunker hill, holding the historic rail fence with John Stark, and protecting the retreat of the main body of the American soldiers from the redoubt, is a household story. Colonel Reed rendered faithful and efficient service during the long, irksome months of the siege. His only subsequent service was with the army in Canada un-

der General Sullivan in 1776, where his regiment suffered severely from disease, more than one third dying during the campaign. On the retreat Colonel Reed was attacked by smallpox before arriving at Ticonderoga, and recovering from this disease with both sight and hearing seriously impaired, he was compelled to retire from the service.

The most important figure among New Hampshire men during the siege of Boston after the battle of Bunker hill was, beyond question, that of John Sullivan, who early in July succeeded General Folsom in command of the New Hampshire troops, who, with three Massachusetts regiments, constituted one of the six brigades of the army of investment as organized by Washington. The story of his early life reads like that of improbable romance. He was born in Somersworth, N. H., February 17, 1740. His father, John Sullivan, who died a year later than his son, in 1796, at the age of 105, was born in Limerick, Ireland, during the famous siege of 1691, and came to America in 1723. The son, when but a boy of fifteen, became a member of the family of Judge Isaac Livermore of Portsmouth, and under his instruction, though without previous educational advantages than those furnished him by his Irish schoolmaster father, prepared himself for the profession of law. He early exhibited ability of high order, and attained by his industry, learning, and eloquence a distinguished position at the bar of the province of New Hampshire. Soon after his marriage, at the age of twenty, he purchased a home in Durham, which continued to be his residence until his death in 1795, and the residence of his widow until her death in 1820. In 1772 he was appointed a major in the militia, and in December, 1774, in connection with John Langdon, led the successful expeditions against Fort William and Mary. He was sent from New Hampshire in May, 1774, as a delegate to the first continental congress, and was also an active member of the second congress in 1775, serving on important committees, and holding the chairmanship of that on war, where he was made one of the brigadier-generals of the first continental army then engaged in the siege of Boston. His appointment was the result of a compromise. General Folsom and Colonel Stark were both candidates for the appointment, but a feeling had grown up between these two distinguished patriots and their friends, amounting almost to bitterness, which made it seem unadvisable to appoint either, and so the choice fell upon Sullivan. In the light of subsequent events it may well be said that the compromise was a fortunate one, as was also that when the army was reorganized in 1777. Stark and Folsom were again rival

candidates for a brigadier-general's commission, when Colonel Poor, who was not a candidate, received the coveted honor. It will be remembered that Colonel Stark refused to serve under General Poor, as he had at first refused to report to General Folsom, and the question has sometimes been raised why he rendered loyal and cheerful service under Sullivan. The answer is not difficult. Stark was undoubtedly pleased, if he could not have the brigadier-general's commission himself, to have Folsom superseded, but in the later event he could not be reconciled to the idea of having one whom he regarded as a junior colonel, and who had served as junior in the same brigade, promoted over his head. There was a difference in the two cases, which accounted for the difference in Stark's conduct.

When Washington took command of the army July 3, 1775, if such it might be called, it consisted of an enrollment of about 17,000 armed men, of whom about 14,500 were present and fit for duty. Frothingham, in his invaluable history of the siege, says of it:

"General Washington found himself at the head of a body of armed men rather than of regular ranks of soldiers; of men grown rugged in the calls of labor, patriotic, true to the American cause, but with high notions of independence, and hence impatient of the necessary restraints of a life of war. Discipline was lax; offences were frequent; there was no general organization, and, worse than all, hardly powder enough in the camp for nine cartridges to a man. Washington felt the difficulty of maintaining, with such material, a line of posts so exposed against an army of well disciplined and well supplied veterans. He was obliged to keep every part of his extended works well guarded, while the enemy could concentrate his force on any one point, and without an hour's notice could make a formidable attack. It was under such circumstances that he was obliged to remodel his army and summon order to arise out of confusion."<sup>1</sup> In a letter dated July 27, 1775, Washington himself wrote: "I found a mixed multitude of people here, under very little discipline, order, or government."

The British force in Boston was estimated at about 11,000, and was from time to time during the siege considerably reinforced.

In organizing his army Washington arranged it in three grand divisions, each consisting of two brigades, or twelve regiments, in which the troops from the same colony were, as far as practicable, brought together. The right wing of the army, which Washington placed at Roxbury, which, with its neighboring towns, commanded

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham, p. 217.

the approaches to the peninsula town from the south, was placed under the command of the senior major-general, Artemas Ward, who had been in chief command until the arrival of Washington. The first brigade, composed exclusively of Massachusetts regiments, was in command of Brigadier-General John Thomas; and the second brigade, composed of three regiments of Connecticut troops, numbering 2,333, and three Massachusetts commands, was in command of Brigadier-General Joseph Spencer.

The left wing was placed under command of Maj.-Gen. Charles Lee, who had obtained the commission of major-general, second in command to Washington, everybody now knows how. The first brigade, under command of Maj.-Gen. John Sullivan, which was composed of the three New Hampshire regiments of Stark, Poor, and Reed, and with the enrollment at that time, July 9, 1775, of 1,664 men, the three Massachusetts regiments of Colonels Nixon, Mansfield, and Doolittle, numbering 1,215 men, was given the position of first importance on the north side of the besieged town, at Winter hill, later occupying Ploughed hill as well, and commanded the approaches to Charlestown Neck.

The center, with headquarters at Cambridge, filled the gap of the semicircular land environment of Boston. Washington had established his headquarters there, and Maj.-Gen. Israel Putnam was in command of the division, with Brig.-Gen. William Heath in command of the six Massachusetts regiments composing the first brigade, and General Putnam, as senior officer, in command of the second brigade, composed of one Connecticut and five Massachusetts regiments. The second brigade, under General Putnam, had its position in Cambridge, but General Heath's brigade scattered its regiments to right and left, the Massachusetts regiment of Colonel Gerrish furnishing the companies for the protection of Malden and Medford, thus being brought into close contact and coöperation with General Sullivan's brigade.

<sup>1</sup>The staff roll of the first New Hampshire regiment on August 1, 1775, was: Colonel, John Stark; lieutenant-colonel, Isaac Wyman; major, John Moore, in place of Maj. Andrew McClary, killed at Bunker hill; adjutant, Abiel Chandler; quartermaster, Henry Parkinson; chaplain, David Osgood; surgeon, Obediah Williams; surgeon's mate, Josiah Chase.

The first company of this regiment had been commanded by Capt. Isaac Baldwin of Hillsborough, who was killed at Bunker hill. John Hale of Hopkinton succeeded him in command, and his lieutenant was

<sup>1</sup>See N. H. State Papers, vol. 14, for rosters of the three regiments.

Stephen Hoit, also of Hopkinton. The men composing this company were largely from Hillsborough, Hopkinton, Bradford, and Warner.

The second company was under the command of Elisha Woodbury of Salem, Lieut. Thomas Hardy of Pelham, and Second Lieut. Jonathan Corlis of Salem, the company being mostly made up of Salem, Windham, and Pelham men.

The officers of the third company were Capt. Samuel Richards and Lieuts. Moses Little and Jesse Carr, all of Goffstown, and the men were nearly all from Goffstown, New Boston, and Weare.

Capt. Thomas McLaughlin of the fourth company was from Bedford, and his first lieutenant was from Derryfield, now Manchester. The men were from Derryfield, Bedford, and Brookline.

The fifth company was under command of Capt. Joshua Abbott of Concord, with First Lieut. Samuel Atkinson, also of Concord, and Second Lieut. Abiel Chandler of Boscawen. This was a Concord, Boscawen, and Salisbury company.

Another Concord company was the sixth, with Capt. Gordon Hutchins and Lieut. Daniel Livermore, both from that town, and the rank and file made up from Concord, Henniker, and vicinity.

Capt. Aaron Kinsman of the seventh company was of Bow, and Lieut. Ebenezer Eastman was from Concord, but the men were from different small towns in the state, who had come to Concord for enlistment.

Henry Dearborn of Nottingham was captain of the eighth company, and his lieutenants, Amos Morrill and Michael McClary, were from Epsom. The men were from Nottingham, Deerfield, Chichester, Epsom, Exeter, and Barrington.

The ninth company was commanded by Daniel Moore of Deerfield, and his lieutenants were Ebenezer Frye and John Moore of Pembroke. The company was recruited largely in Pembroke, Allenstown, and Bow.

Captain George Reid and both his lieutenants, Abraham Reid and James Anderson, were of Londonderry, as were also most of the men of the tenth company.

As has been previously noted the fourth provincial congress of New Hampshire, May 24, 1775, appointed Enoch Poor of Exeter, colonel, John McDuffee of Rochester, lieutenant-colonel, and Joseph Cilley of Nottingham, major, of a regiment of troops to be known as the Second New Hampshire regiment, and authorized the committee of safety to issue orders for enlisting the men. On the same day orders were issued to the following persons to enlist each a company

of sixty-two able-bodied, effective men, viz.: Winborn Adams, Durham; Winthrop Rowe, Kensington; Henry Elkins, Hampton; Samuel Gilman, Newmarket; Philip Tilton, Kingston; Benjamin Titcomb, Dover; Jonathan Wentworth, Somersworth; Jeremiah Clough, Canterbury; James Norris, Epping; and Zaccheus Clough, Poplin. Capt. Zaccheus Clough did not accept the appointment, and Richard Shortridge of Portsmouth was appointed in his place. The other regimental officers besides those named were: Adjutant, Jeremiah Fogg of Kensington; quartermaster, Joseph Fogg of Kensington; surgeon, C. G. Adams of Exeter; surgeon's mate, William Sawyer of Plaistow.

Capt. Winborn Adams's company had for first and second lieutenants, John Griffin and Zebulon Drew, both of Durham, and the men were, with few exceptions, from Durham, Barrington, Madbury, and Lee.

James Carr of Somersworth was first lieutenant, and Jethro Heard of Dover second lieutenant, of Capt. Jonathan Wentworth's company, and the men were from Dover, Somersworth, and vicinity.

Capt. James Norris and his lieutenants, Simeon Dearborn, John Gilman, David Kelley, the latter being promoted to a lieutenantcy July 20, when Simeon Dearborn was discharged, were all from Epping, as were most of the company, a few hailing, however, from Deerfield, Nottingham, Poplin, and Raymond.

First Lieut. Zebulon Hilliard of Capt. Winthrop Rowe's company was from Hampton Falls, and Second Lieut. Abraham Sanborn from Poplin, while the men were largely from Kensington and Seabrook.

Of Captain Gilman's company, Lieut. Benjamin Kimball was from Newmarket, and Lieut. Harvey Moore from Stratham, and most of the company was recruited in these two towns.

Capt. Henry Elkins's lieutenants were Moses Leavitt of North Hampton and Richard Brown of Rye. The company was also composed of Hampton, North Hampton, and Rye men.

Captain Titcomb's company had for first lieutenants Frederick M. Bell of Newcastle and Ephraim Evans of Dover. The men were from Dover, Rochester, Barrington, Wolfeborough, and New Durham.

Lieut. Aaron Sanborn of Captain Clough's company was from Sanbornton, and Lieut. Thomas Lyford from Northfield. The men were from Northfield, Sanbornton, and Canterbury.

Captain Tilton had for his first lieutenant Jacob Webster of Kingston, and for second lieutenant John Tilton of Sandown. The men were largely from Kingston, Sandown, and Brentwood.

Captain Shortridge's company was mostly from Portsmouth and vicinity, as was his first lieutenant, Zachariah Beal, while Nathaniel Thwing, his second lieutenant, was from Newmarket.

With the exception of the last named company all were recruited within a week after Colonel Poor's appointment. June 17, the day of the battle of Bunker hill, two companies of the regiment were ordered to proceed by the middle of the next week to Cambridge, but on June 18, news of the battle having reached Exeter, the entire regiment, except Captain Elkins's company, was ordered to march immediately to the scene of hostilities.

The field and staff officers of Col. James Reed's regiment, the Third New Hampshire, were: Lieut.-colonel, Israel Gilman of Newmarket; major, Nathan Hale of Rindge; brigade major, Alexander Scammell of Durham; adjutant, Stephen Peabody of Amherst; quartermaster, Isaac Frye of Amherst; surgeon, Ezra Green of Dover; surgeon's mate, Nathaniel Breed of Packersfield. The two last named were not appointed until June 27, ten days after the battle of Bunker hill was fought.

The line officers of the regiment were:

First company, Capt. Hezekiah Hutchins, Hampstead, First Lieut. Amos Emerson, Chester, Second Lieut. John March, Chester. The men were mainly from Chester, Hampstead, and Candia.

Second company, Capt. Jacob Hinds, Chesterfield, First Lieut. Isaac Stone, Westmoreland, Second Lieut. George Aldrich, Westmoreland. The men were from those towns and Hinsdale.

Third company, Capt. Levi Spaulding, Lyndeborough, First Lieut. Joseph Bradford, Second Lieut. Thomas Buss, the lieutenants and men being from Lyndeborough, Hudson, Temple, etc.

Fourth company, Capt. Ezra Towne, New Ipswich, First Lieut. Josiah Browne, New Ipswich, and Second Lieut. John Harkness of Richmond, with men from the same towns.

Fifth company, Capt. Jonathan Whitcomb, Swanzey, First Lieut. Elijah Clayes, Fitzwilliam, Second Lieut. Stephen Carter, Keene, the men being mostly from the same towns.

Sixth company, Capt. William Walker, First Lieut. James Brown, Second Lieut. William Roby, all of Dunstable, with men from the same town, Merrimack, Hudson, and Amherst.

Seventh company, Capt. Philip Thomas, Rindge, First Lieut. John Harper, Jaffrey, Second Lieut. Ezekiel Rand, Rindge, with nearly all the men from the same towns.

Eighth company, Capt. Benjamin Mann, Mason, First Lieut. James Brewer, Marlborough, Second Lieut. Samuel Pettingale, Wilton, with men from the same towns and from Temple.

Ninth company, Capt. Josiah Crosby, First Lieut. Daniel Wilkins,

Second Lieut. Thomas Maxwell, all of Amherst, as were most of the men, the town including then Milford and Mont Vernon.

Tenth company, Capt. John Marcy, Walpole, First Lieut. Isaac Farwell, Charlestown, Second Lieut. James Taggart, Peterborough. The men were from these and other Cheshire county towns.

The names of officers and men in these three regiments are almost exclusively English names. The men who bore them were Englishmen,—English yeomen of the same type as those who, under Cromwell more than a century and a quarter before, had overthrown a corrupt monarchy and established in its place a commonwealth. They were at the first wretchedly armed. Their guns were of different calibres, with but few bayonets, with but little ammunition, and with commissary provisions of the most primitive character. After Washington took command, and during the progress of the siege, there was improvement, but there was all through the siege sad lack of arms, ammunition, and clothing.

Moses Emerson of Durham had been appointed "Commissary for the Army" May 25, by the convention at Exeter, and some idea of the difficulties of his position may be gleaned from a letter sent by him to the New Hampshire committee of safety, dated eleven days after the engagement at Bunker hill. He wrote:<sup>1</sup> "As for picks and shovels, there is a supply, having bought some and having received some from Cambridge— . . . Before I arrived Col. Stark borrowed a large chest of medicine of Massachusetts, which, with that brought by Dr. Adams and a small one sent by Dr. Cutter, is thought to be a pretty good supply for the present. I have not as yet begun to deliver out stores, but expect to begin the day after to-morrow if a supply comes in. At present we have but 11 bbl. of pork and 10 of flour in store . . . Can't inform you what quantity of fresh beef our troops can consume in a week; should think near about 6,000. Tents, wooden bowles & platters & spoons are very much wanted."

After the arrival of Washington and the organization of the army there was a semblance of a regular commissary supply, but the supply was gathered from the nearby towns in Massachusetts and from the localities in New Hampshire which had furnished troops. If there was at some times scarcity, the besiegers had, at least, the advantage of the besieged in the quality of food, since there was during a part of the siege actual suffering in Boston, both among the troops and the inhabitants who had remained in the town.

One of the most important achievements of the summer was one in

<sup>1</sup>State Papers, Vol. 14, p. 45.

which the New Hampshire troops bore the main part. They had made the Winter hill fortifications among the strongest, if not, indeed, the very strongest, in the cordon of works surrounding Boston. But in front of Winter hill, and within point-blank shot of Bunker hill, was what was then called Ploughed hill, now within the limits of the city of Somerville, and half a century and more ago known as Mount Benedict, the site of the historic Ursuline convent. Washington early recognized the importance of taking possession of it. It had been rumored, almost from the day of Washington's taking command of the army, that the British intended to come out of Boston and storm the American intrenchments, and it had come to be understood that Earl Percy was to make the attack on the 25th of August, and thus have the opportunity of retrieving the honor he lost in the Lexington affair. There is little doubt that during the latter part of August Washington felt himself ready to resist an attack and would have welcomed it. It was expected that the occupation of Ploughed hill would bring on a general action, but in any event Ploughed hill was a strategic point in the siege. The British did not make the predicted assault August 25, and on the night of August 26 a fatigue party of a thousand men, with a guard of 2,400, most of whom were New Hampshire troops, under General Sullivan, marched to this hill, and worked so diligently and effectively during the night, that in the morning the works were strong enough to form a good protection against the enemy's cannon. The British recognized the importance of the work performed, and on the morning of the 27th, Sunday, began a heavy cannonade from Bunker hill, also from one of the ships in Mystic river, and from two floating batteries stationed in the river, and continued it during the day. Three of General Sullivan's command were killed, but the new intrenchment was held. General Sullivan did not return the fire on account of the scarcity of powder. He planted a battery, however, at Ten Hills farm to play upon the floating batteries in the river, and sunk one of them and effectually silenced the other. The one weakness of the American force at this time was the scarcity of powder. Colonel Reed, under date of August 24, wrote: "The word 'powder' sets us all on tiptoe. We have been in a terrible situation, occasioned by a mistake in a return; we reckoned upon three hundred quarter casks, and had but thirty-two barrels." The fire of the British ceased at night on the 26th, but was renewed on Monday, and the British were observed from Chelsea to be drawn up and in motion on Bunker hill. The camp was alarmed, and five thousand troops were marched to Ploughed hill and to the Charlestown road to reinforce

General Sullivan, and Washington expected, even hoped, that an attack would be made. The British, however, declined the challenge, though they continued for several days to bombard the works, which General Sullivan continued, under fire, to strengthen. The firing ceased on the 10th of September. This intrenchment of Ploughed hill was one of the most important events of the summer and autumn, and the task of defending the works fell to General Sullivan and to his New Hampshire troops. There was a furious cannonade of shot and shell against the works on the 20th and 21st of September, and again on the 25th, but it was ineffective, though it was attacked more furiously than any other work during the entire siege.

General Sullivan with his New Hampshire troops was virtually in command at Winter hill and Ploughed hill during the entire siege, except for a brief period in November, 1775, when he went to Portsmouth under orders from Washington to seize all officers of government there who had given proof of their unfriendly disposition to the patriot cause. Winter hill and Ploughed hill were the most important points on the north of Boston, and were held during almost the entire siege by General Sullivan's brigade, the most important part of which were the three regiments of Colonels Stark, Poor, and Reid.

The critical period of the siege came in December. Washington had been planning an attack on Boston during this month, when he would be able to cross his troops on the ice, which it was anticipated would then be strong enough to bear them. In November and December, however, the terms of enlistment of the troops of the four provinces which made up the army expired. Enlistments had been made under provincial and colonial authority instead of continental.

In the reorganization of the army to make it continental Washington suffered serious embarrassment owing to the fact that the men would not reënlist unless they were allowed their favorite commanders, and officers refused to serve unless their rank was adjusted to meet their expectations. Under date of November 11 Washington wrote: "The trouble I have in the arrangement of the army is really inconceivable." But the obstacle, so far as officers were concerned, was at length overcome, and about the middle of November recruiting orders were given out. It was expected that most of the old army would reënlist, but Washington was doomed to severe disappointment. Men refused to reënlist. By the first of December only about 5,000 men had signed papers. Even the patriotism and patience of George Washington was put to a severe test. He wrote: "Such a dearth of public spirit and want of virtue, such stock-jobbing and fertility in all the low arts, to

obtain advantage of one kind and another, I never saw before, and pray God I may never be witness to again."

At this juncture the men of the New Hampshire regiments, with a few inconspicuous exceptions, stood fast by the cause.

The Connecticut troops, however, failed, and failed utterly. It is to the glory of New Hampshire that she joined with Massachusetts in making good the defection and disgrace of Connecticut. The situation, critical in the extreme, is best described in letters of General Sullivan to the New Hampshire committee of safety. Under date of November 29, he wrote from Winter hill :

<sup>1</sup> "General Washington has sent to New Hampshire for thirty-one companies to take possession of and defend our lines in room of the Connecticut forces who most scandalously refuse to tarry to the first of January. I must therefore entreat your utmost exertions to forward the raising those companies, lest the enemy should take advantage of their absence and force our lines. As the Connecticut men will at all events leave us at or before the tenth of next month, pray call upon every true friend to his country to assist with heart and hand in raising and sending forward those companies as soon as possible."

The next day, November 30, General Sullivan had obtained additional information, and his letter under that date to the committee of safety is more urgent and his language more forcible. He wrote : <sup>2</sup>

"I have by command of his Excellency General Washington to inform you that the Connecticut forces, (deaf to the entreaties of their own as well as all other officers & regardless of the contempt with which their own government threatens to treat them upon their return), have absolutely refused to tarry till the first day of January, but will quit the lines on the sixth of December. They have deceived us and their officers by contending there would be no difficulty with them till they have got so near the close of their term : and now to their eternal infamy demand a bounty to induce them to tarry only the three weeks. This is such an insult to every American that we are determined to release them at the expiration of their term at all hazards & find ourselves obliged immediately to supply their place with troops from New Hampshire & Massachusetts Bay. The number required from you is thirty-one companys of sixty-four men in a company, including a captain, two subalterns, three sergeants and three corporals which makes fifty-five privates each. The whole number of officers and men amount to 1984. . . . They are to serve to the 15th of January next if required. . . . I earnestly entreat you for the honour of

<sup>1</sup>State Papers, Vol. 7, p. 676. <sup>2</sup>State Papers, Vol. 11, p. 675.

New Hampshire to show the world your attachment to the noble cause. Let the worthless sons of Connecticut know that the other colonies will not suffer our lives to be given up or our country destroyed, nor the sons of New Hampshire (like those parsimonious wretches) want to be bribed into the preservation of their liberties. I hope the eager greed with which the New Hampshire forces will march to take possession of and defend our lines will evince to the world their love of liberty and regard to their country. As you find the business requires such infinite haste, I must entreat you not to give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till the troops are on their march. . . . In case ammunition cannot be supplied for all we must contrive to supply those who are destitute here."

General Sullivan was fully cognizant of the situation, and made recommendations concerning men who should be captains of companies to be raised.<sup>1</sup> He named Moses Yeaton of Somersworth, George Jerry Osborne and George Turner of Portsmouth, James Hale of Newmarket, Cutting Cilley of Nottingham, David Place of Rochester, Alpheus Chesley of Durham, John Waldron of Dover, John Ward Gilman of Exeter, Mark Wiggin of Stratham, John Hill of Barrington, and James Shepard of Canterbury.

The committee of safety took immediate action, as appears from the following from their records :

2 "New Hampshire Committee of Safety

Saturday, December 2, 1775.

In consequence of a letter from General Sullivan by express informing of the withdrawing of the Connecticut troops from the lines at Cambridge and desiring a number of troops to be sent from this colony to supply their place, the Committee met at Portsmouth on the 2d day of December, and gave orders to the following gentlemen, each to enlist a company of 61 able bodied men, including three sergeants and three corporals well provided with arms and blankets, to serve in the Continental Army under the command of General Washington, until the 15th of January next unless sooner discharged, and as soon as enlisted to march them immediately to join Gen. Sullivan's brigade, viz. : Captains David Place, Henry Elkins, Daniel Runnells, John Watson, Alpheus Chesley, David Copp, Moses Baker, Mark Wiggin, Joseph Pearsons, Moses Yeaton, Elijah Denbo, Jacob Webster, Nathaniel Odiorne, Peter Coffin, Stephen Clark, and Greenleaf Clark.

By Order of the Committee.

WILLIAM WHIPPLE,  
*Chairman pro tem."*

<sup>1</sup>State Papers, II, p. 677.    <sup>2</sup>Force, Amer. Archives, Vol 4, p. 7.

On this same day, December 2, General Sullivan sent by express another letter to the committee of safety. He wrote: "I take this opportunity to inform you that the Connecticut forces not only determine to quit our lines at the expiration of their term, but to their eternal infamy endeavored to leave us yesterday which was five days before their time expired. We can therefore have no hope of their tarrying after the sixth. Half General Putnam's regiment is now under guard. The people who have escaped from Boston inform us that the enemy are fully acquainted with our situation and will probably take advantage of it. For Heaven's sake despatch your forces as soon as possible."

The form of enlisting orders was adopted the same day, December 2, and was directed to the several gentlemen who were selected by the committee of safety to enlist companies and serve as captains. It read as follows:

<sup>1</sup> "You are hereby authorized immediately to enlist a Company to consist of sixty-one able-bodied, effective men including three sergeants and three corporals, well accoutred with arms and provided with blankets to serve in the Continental Army under command of His Excellency General Washington until the fifteenth day of January next unless sooner dismissed, and you are hereby informed that you will have liberty to nominate two subalterns in said Company under you who will be commissioned accordingly, if approved by this Committee. And you are to march the said company when enlisted, seasonably so as to join General Sullivan's brigade on Winter Hill at or before the 10th of December, inst, and you may assure the said company that their pay will be the same as the other continental troops, will commence the day they march and that those who supply themselves with provisions on their march shall receive the price of their rations, and that they will be paid off the moment they are dismissed and also be paid for their return home.

By Order of the Committee.

WILLIAM WHIPPLE,  
*Chairman pro tem.*"

Letters were also sent by the committee to Colonel Hobart and Colonel Walker, urging them to proceed with all possible despatch to raise these companies. Colonel Hobart was sent to Hillsborough county and Colonel Walker was urged to do everything possible in what is now Merrimack county. The letter to Colonel Walker from the committee, dated December 3, is of interest:

<sup>1</sup> State Papers, Vol. 7, p. 679.

<sup>1</sup> "By express from Gen. Sullivan we are informed that the Connecticut troops whose term of enlistment expired the last day of November, are about returning home. Gen. Washington has desired New Hampshire to send him 31 companies to man the lines until the 15th of January next, and to be at Winter Hill by the 10th of this month at the furthest. . . . We earnestly request your utmost exertions in raising and forwarding the men, as our lines being kept open may be of fatal consequence. The time is short, pray employ every moment to have some companies march. The captains are desired to be careful in enlisting none but good men properly equipped as they cannot be mustered. They must take provisions from home to last them to the camp for which the General Engages to pay the money. . . . James Shepard of Canterbury has been recommended as a good man to raise a company."

In the meantime General Sullivan was earnestly renewing his request for the reinforcements, and incidentally reaffirming and emphasizing his already expressed opinion of the Connecticut troops. Under date of Winter hill, December 3, he wrote :

<sup>2</sup> "Notwithstanding every method has been taken to keep the Connecticut forces on the ground till relief could be had from the country, the cowardly traitors begin to leave us in companies and regiments, and that even six or seven days before the time is expired. What has possessed these vile poltroons remains yet a secret. We have sent handbills similar to the one enclosed before them on the road, and I trust they will have the desired effect. A gentleman from Boston was here last evening and says the enemy are by some means or other fully acquainted with our situation and he fears much they will take advantage of it. I entreat you gentlemen to spare no pains in forwarding the march of your troops, as much may depend on their speedy arrival."

It was no small thing which was requested of New Hampshire, to furnish on so short a notice 31 companies of able-bodied men numbering 63 men each, these to furnish their own equipment, and the report of progress sent to General Sullivan by the committee of safety under date of December 5 is of the greatest value as containing an enumeration of some of the obstacles which had to be overcome. The committee say: <sup>3</sup> "Upon Mr. Sherburn's arrival on Friday evening, expresses were sent out which brought the committee together on

<sup>1</sup> State Papers. Vol. 7, p. 680.

<sup>2</sup> State Papers, Vol. 7, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> State Papers, Vol. 7, p. 682.

Saturday in the forenoon. They immediately proceeded with the utmost diligence to raise the companies requested. Sent off expresses to the County of Hillsborough, to Concord, etc., as well as to the neighboring towns, with a considerable number of enlisting orders and letters to gentlemen of the greatest influence, requesting their vigorous exertions in the affair, but have had no returns from the distant parts. We have had many obstacles to encounter which we did not expect, and have spent most of the time, day and night, since we met, in endeavoring to surmount them. None of the troops here would enlist before they were paid for their time here until the last enlistment, yet no pay rolls were made out before. We have near 20 to examine and pay, and a great part to draw over and calculate, which took up a great part of our time, and many demanded pay for their time since the last enlistment, which we were obliged to comply with. Then another great difficulty was that but three out of four commissioned officers could be admitted in these companies proposed, and some clamored highly because no field officers were to go, alleging they should be commanded by field officers from the other colonies, which they would not submit to. Several accounts were current of naval preparations making at Boston, supposed for this port, which occasioned many to think we should leave ourselves naked by sending the troops from hence, and encouraged the officers and soldiers to expect their being continued here if they did not enlist. However, after struggling with all those difficulties, we have so far surmounted them as to get several companies filled up. Captains Baker, Copp, Elkins, Clark, and Webster, from the troops here, we expect will march tomorrow. Captain Wiggin of Stratham, we hear, has raised a company and is ready to march. Several more companies are forward. Captain Denbo of Lee listed near 30 men here and went home to recruit on Sunday. Many more are forward. We think that there is a good prospect of near one half the companies you asked for being seasonably in from this part of the colony. We hope the people on the western part of the government will exert themselves. A few more than 31 enlistments have been given out as we thought some would fail. Strict orders have been given every one to be at the camp by the 10th instant, but it is probable the time is so short some will be later; if they should in that case be sent back it will hurt the cause greatly. We shall continue our most strenuous efforts to forward the men."

Such efforts could but meet with the hearty approval of General-Sullivan and of the commander-in-chief. Replying to the commit-

tee, December 8, he shows himself so appreciative of the efforts of New Hampshire that he omits to mention the Connecticut troops. He writes: <sup>1</sup> "Your favor signed by Colonel Whipple is now before me, but previous to the receipt thereof Common Fame, with his usual readiness, had proclaimed your vigorous exertions and the noble spirit of your people. General Washington and all the other officers are extremely pleased, and bestow the highest encomiums on you and your troops, freely acknowledging that New Hampshire forces, for bravery and resolution, far surpass the other colonies, and that no province discovers so much zeal in the common cause. Though I wish your troops may all arrive before the 10th instant, yet none will be refused on account of their being a few days later."

The alacrity with which New Hampshire responded to the call for troops in this critical emergency was, indeed, deserving of the high praise accorded her. Gen. Nathaniel Greene wrote on the 18th of December: <sup>2</sup> "The Connecticut troops have gone home; the militia from this province and New Hampshire have come in to take their places. Upon this occasion they have discovered a zeal that does them the highest honor. New Hampshire behaves nobly."

Dr. Belknap says that 16 companies of New Hampshire militia, of 61 men each, supplied the place of the Connecticut troops. But the minutes of the committee of safety and the report of Major Burnham, the mustering officer appointed by the committee, show that 31 companies of 63 men each marched to Winter hill in December, 1775, and were mustered in. These companies were officered as follows:

Company 1. Henry Elkins, Hampton, captain; David Page, first lieutenant; Ephraim Eaton, second lieutenant.

Company 2. Benjamin Taylor, Amherst, captain; Nathan Bullard, first lieutenant; John Bradford, second lieutenant.

Company 3. Daniel Runnells, Londonderry, captain; Joseph Gregg, first lieutenant; Daniel Miltimore, second lieutenant.

Company 4. Jacob Webster, Kingston, captain; Ezekiel Gile, first lieutenant; Abijah Wheeler, second lieutenant.

Company 5. Thomas Bartlett, Nottingham, captain; Daniel Page, first lieutenant; Samuel Gray, second lieutenant.

Company 6. Benjamin Emery, Concord, captain; John Bradley, first lieutenant; Moses Eastman, second lieutenant.

Company 7. Augustus Blanchard, Merrimack, captain; David Allds, first lieutenant; John Hazelton, second lieutenant.

<sup>1</sup> State Papers, Vol. 7, p. 685.

<sup>2</sup> Frothingham, Siege of Boston, p. 274.

Company 8. Andrew Bunton, Pembroke, captain; Samuel McConnell, first lieutenant; Peter Robinson, second lieutenant.

Company 9. Samuel Connor, Pembroke, captain; Matthew Petten-gill, first lieutenant; Nathaniel Head, second lieutenant.

Company 10. Mark Wiggin, Stratham, captain; Nicholas Rawlings, first lieutenant; William Chase, second lieutenant.

Company 11. James Gilmore, Windham, captain; Samuel Kelley, first lieutenant; David Gordon, second lieutenant.

Company 12. Stephen Clark, Epping, captain; Simon Dearborn, first lieutenant; Daniel Gordon, second lieutenant.

Company 13. Moses Baker, Candia, captain; Joseph Dearborn, first lieutenant; Benjamin Cass, second lieutenant.

Company 14. Samuel Baker, Newmarket, captain; Zebulon Barker, first lieutenant; John Allen, second lieutenant.

Company 15. David Place, Rochester, captain; Thomas Hodgdon, first lieutenant; Aaron Hanson, second lieutenant.

Company 16. Elijah Dinsmore, Lee, captain; John McCrillis, first lieutenant; Eliphalet Duda, second lieutenant.

Company 17. Alpheus Chesley, Durham, captain; Archelaus Woodman, first lieutenant; Zaccheus Clough, second lieutenant.

Company 18. John Waldron, Dover, captain; Ebenezer Ricker, first lieutenant; John Goodwin, second lieutenant.

Company 19. John Drew, Barrington, captain; William Babb, first lieutenant; George Waterhouse, second lieutenant.

Company 20. Greenleaf Clark, Greenland, captain; David Simpson, first lieutenant; John Johnson, second lieutenant.

Company 21. Nathaniel Odiorne, Portsmouth, captain; John Furness, first lieutenant; William Stilson, second lieutenant.

Company 22. Benjamin Boardman, Exeter, captain; Porter Kimball, first lieutenant; Winthrop Dudley, second lieutenant.

Company 23. Eleazer Cummings, New Ipswich, captain; Henry Ferguson, first lieutenant; Ezekiel Goodale, second lieutenant.

Company 24. Joseph Parsons, Rye, captain; William Cooper, first lieutenant; Ebenezer Bayley, second lieutenant.

Company 25. David Copps, Wakefield, captain; Andrew Gilman, first lieutenant; Samuel Wallingford, second lieutenant.

Company 26. Noah Worcester, Hollis, captain; Obadiah Parker, first lieutenant; Robert Seaver, second lieutenant.

Company 27. Moses Yeaton, Somersworth, captain; Daniel Higgins, first lieutenant; Moses Yeaton, second lieutenant.

Company 28. Joshua Martin, Goffstown, captain; James Smith, first lieutenant; William Ayers, second lieutenant.

Company 29. Timothy Clements, Hopkinton, captain; Joseph Chandler, first lieutenant; Amos Gould, second lieutenant.

Company 30. Peter Coffin, Exeter, captain; John Hull, first lieutenant; James Sinclair, second lieutenant.

Company 31. James Shepard, Canterbury, captain; Samuel Chamberlain, first lieutenant; Abraham Perkins, second lieutenant.

The residence of the captains gives a fairly accurate idea of the sections of the state from which the companies were recruited. They were called "Six Weeks' Men," but the greater part remained with General Sullivan upon Winter hill until the evacuation of Boston by the British took place March 17, 1776, when they were discharged. Thus New Hampshire had in the field at Winter hill in December, 1775, nearly 5,000 men. These were in addition to those operating with the army of the north in the operations against Canada, and those who were armed for home defense in different sections of the province. It is much to be doubted if, during the eleven months covered by the siege of Boston, any colony or province of the thirteen had, in proportion to its population, so many men actively engaged in military operations against the British crown.

The siege of Boston was the first great success of the War for Independence. Its success made the Declaration of Independence possible. It was commemorated by the authorization of the gold medal presented to Washington. It gave the patriot cause just grounds for hope, courage, and enthusiasm. This great success was won by the troops of four colonies, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, if, indeed, Connecticut, in view of her desertion at the critical moment, deserves the honor of being connected with the other three colonies. Rhode Island was loyal and true, but her contribution to the patriot force was numerically small. Massachusetts performed her part nobly, so nobly that there has sometimes been a disposition on the part of Massachusetts historians to claim for that commonwealth almost the entire glory of the successful termination of the siege.

This much must not, however, be forgotten. There were two great crises in the siege, which, had they not been promptly met, would have made failure on the part of the Americans probable, if not indeed inevitable.

The first was on the night of the battle of Bunker hill. The commands of Stark and Reed were destitute of powder, but they obtained

picks and shovels, and by the morning of the 18th had so fortified Winter hill, commanding the approaches to Charlestown Neck, and Bunker hill itself, that the siege of Boston was recommenced in a deadly earnestness which could not be misunderstood. New Hampshire troops selected the most strategic point for offensive and defensive operations to the north of Boston on the evening of a retreat, and New Hampshire troops held it until, on the seventeenth of March, nine months later, the British forces, defeated and humiliated, sailed out of Boston harbor.

The second came in December, 1775, when Washington's lines were so weakened by the desertion of the Connecticut troops that a successful attack might have been made upon them had not New Hampshire men, with rare devotion, taken the place of unpatriotic and base deserters of a cause which should have been as dear to Connecticut as to New Hampshire, and by such devotion so strengthened the army of Washington as to give him assurance of certain success. The history of the siege of Boston cannot be regarded as adequate or complete without due recognition of the splendid service of New Hampshire men under the leadership of such men as Sullivan, Stark, Poor, and Reed.



















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